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DE RUEHSK #0084 0311304
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FM AMEMBASSY MINSK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5575
INFO RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 3572
RUEHVL/AMEMBASSY VILNIUS 3817
RUEHKV/AMEMBASSY KYIV 0030
RHMFIS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS MINSK 000084

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PHUM BO

SUBJECT: CLINTON BENCH AT KURAPATY MASSACRE SITE VANDALIZED AGAIN

¶11. (U) During a January 27 trip to the Kurapaty Stalin-era massacre site, DCM and visiting EUR/UMB Office Director Robert Boehme discovered that the bench presented in 1994 by former U.S. President Bill Clinton on behalf of the United States to the people of Belarus had been vandalized again. The top of the bench was broken into pieces and vandals removed one of the pieces from the site. According to historian and researcher Igor Kuznetsov, this attack is at least the 12th time the bench has been vandalized. On January 30, Kuznetsov told Poloff that while GOB guards allegedly patrol the memorial site, they did not report the attack to the police. According to Kuznetsov, the police do not have any suspects in the case.

¶12. (SBU) To better protect the bench, Kuznetsov suggested that the Embassy urge the GOB to increase its patrols of the memorial site or erect a fence around the bench. [Comment: A fence would defeat the purpose of the bench -- a place to sit to contemplate Stalinist crimes -- and would offer a larger target for extremists. End comment.] Given the regularity of the attacks on the bench and the GOB's ineffective protection of the bench, we are considering the possibility of transferring the bench on a temporary basis to the Embassy compound. We would return the bench to the Kurapaty site when a democratic government is in place.

STEWART